

NEW YORK HERALD.

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EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

OFFICE N. W. CORNER OF FULTON AND NASSAU STS.

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THE DAILY HERALD, Four cents per copy. Annual subscription price \$14.

Volume XXX.....No. 48

AMUSEMENTS THIS EVENING.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC, Irving place.—ITALIAN OPERA.—Matinee at Two o'clock.—LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR.

BROADWAY THEATRE, Broadway.—THE LIPS IN DIAM.—PAUL PEE.

WINTER GARDEN, Broadway.—Matinee at Two o'clock.—HARLEQUIN.

NEW BOWERY THEATRE, Bowery.—BRIGAND QUEEN.—STARRS BART.—JACK SHEPHERD.—HILAR DOG.

WALLACK'S THEATRE, Broadway.—GARDEN OF LIFE.

OLYMPIC THEATRE, Broadway.—THE STREETS OF NEW YORK.

BOWERY THEATRE, Bowery.—DARK TOWN.—MIDNIGHT WAGON.—SPECTOR BRIDGEMAN. Matinee at Two o'clock.

HIBLO'S GARDEN, Broadway.—LOVE.

BARNUM'S MUSEUM, Broadway.—TWO MAMMOTH FAY WOODS.—LIVING SKELETON.—GIANT BOY.—ARCADE.—JUMP YEAR.—DAY AND NIGHT.

BRYANT'S MINSTRELS, Mechanic's Hall, 42 Broadway.—ETHIOPIAN SONGS, DANCES, BURLESQUES, AC.—LIVE INDIAN.

WOOD'S MINSTREL HALL, 514 Broadway.—STREETS OF NEW YORK.—THE FLAT BILL.—ETHIOPIAN SONGS, DANCES, AC.

SALLE DIAMONQUE, 506 Broadway.—ROBERT HELLER'S MELANGE OF MODERN MINSTRELS. Matinee at Two o'clock.

IRVING HALL, Irving place.—THO. THOMAS' SYMPHONIC SOIREE.

VAN AMBURGH & CO'S MAMMOTH MENAGERIE, 339 and 341 Broadway.—Open from 10 A. M. to 10 P. M.

HIPPODROME, Fourteenth street.—EQUESTRIAN, GYMNASTIC AND ACRATIC ENTERTAINMENTS.—MOTHER GOOSE.

AMERICAN THEATRE, No. 44 Broadway.—BALLET, FANTOMES, BURLESQUES, AC.—HARVEST HOME.

HOOLEY & CAMPBELL'S MINSTRELS, 199 and 201 Bowery.—SONGS, DANCES, BURLESQUES, AC.—BLACK BRIGADE.

NEW YORK MUSEUM OF ANATOMY, 618 Broadway.—Open from 10 A. M. to 10 P. M.

VANNUCHI'S MUSEUM, 60 Broadway.—MOVING WAX FIGURES.

New York, Saturday, February 18, 1865.

THE SITUATION.

All doubts regarding the occupation of Branchville, South Carolina, by General Sherman, is dissipated by the despatch of one of our Fort Fisher correspondents. The announcement of its capture, supposed on the 8th inst., after three days of hard fighting, was brought to Smithville, N. C., on the 12th inst., by a courier who, at great peril, rode across the country with a despatch from General Sherman to Admiral Porter. Wilmington papers of the 9th inst. and refugees who have reached Smithville confirm this statement; and Richmond journals of Wednesday last say that our War Department has the official announcement of the evacuation of Branchville, which was consequent upon the occupation of Orangeburg, north of it, on the railroad leading to Columbia, by a large force of Sherman's infantry; but they do not mention any fighting in the vicinity. They report, however, that Kilpatrick reached a point within fifteen miles of Augusta, Ga., on the 10th inst., and was attacked by Wheeler, and "driven five miles, with considerable loss." On Tuesday last, they state, there was a Union column within a few miles of Augusta, and, more important still, they say that on Wednesday Sherman's advance had reached the south bank of the Congaree, within a few miles of Columbia, which is situated on the north bank of that river, to which side the rebels had fallen back. A battle was considered imminent. A rumor was in circulation yesterday, purporting to have been brought from Richmond to Annapolis by released Union prisoners, to the effect that Sherman had been checked and Beauregard killed. The latter is possible, but the former very improbable.

Additional daring exploits of the intrepid young Commander Cushing are described in our Fort Fisher correspondence. On the 8th inst., with about fifteen men, he captured the little town of Shalotte, guarded by one hundred rebels, held it for several hours, during which he destroyed large stores of army supplies, provisions and about eighty bales of cotton, and escaped without loss. On the night of the 10th inst. he made a reconnaissance of Cape Fear river, actually penetrating up to the wharves of Wilmington, where he remained sufficiently long to gain much valuable information. He discovered the rebel pirate Chickamauga sunk in the channel of the river. On the next night, with four boats' crews, he went up to the rebel Fort Anderson, and managed to get close enough under its walls to hear an officer, supposed to be General Bragg, haranguing his men on the last ditch and the last stroke for Southern independence.

Our James River despatches represent that, with the exception of occasional exchanges between the batteries and pickets before Petersburg, the stillness in the armies of the James and the Potomac remains undisturbed. The number of rebel deserters coming into the Union lines has increased since the failure of the peace negotiations very considerably. Not only private, but many of Lee's officers, are leaving him. They say that the general feeling of his army is one of hopelessness; that the majority of his men are convinced that their Southern confederacy is a chimera, and would gladly lay down their arms if they had the opportunity.

Our New Orleans despatches published in the HERALD of the 29th ult. announced that General Meade, the Emperor Maximilian's commander at Matamoros, had agreed to return to the rebel authorities in Texas all the refugees who made their escape from Jeff. Davis' despotism in that State across the Rio Grande into Mexico. We have now the statement from Cairo that General Canby has informed General Meade that if he persists in carrying out this arrangement he may expect retaliation by the taking and holding of Mexican officers, man for man, for each of the escaped Texas refugees returned to the rebel officers.

Hands of rebel guerrillas have for some days past been growing through the country in the immediate vicinity of Nashville and Clarksville, Tennessee, plundering the inhabitants and carrying off some of them. On Thursday afternoon about four hundred of these marauders appeared within six miles of Nashville, and captured several wood choppers and government employes. East Tennessee is said to be at present undisturbed by them.

The case of the St. Albans raiders is still undecided by the Montreal court. After some argument between the opposing counsel on Thursday, further proceedings were adjourned over till Monday next.

We have received files of Nassau papers to the 11th inst. The *Guardian* of the 8th informs us that several blockade running steamers had returned to port, having been unable to get into Charleston. Between the 6th and the 11th inst. the steamers Secret, Dream, Florence, Caroline, Chameleon, Virginia, Hansa and Owl returned to Nassau after unsuccessful efforts to run the blockade.

Our files of late rebel newspapers contain some very interesting disclosures regarding the corruption in Jeff. Davis' Cabinet, and give an insight into the actions of his recent dissolution. A committee of the

Richmond Congress has presented Mr. Seddon, the late War Secretary, as guilty of gross swindling, and the Richmond journals make statements which add to his guilt. We have also some developments regarding General Hood's Tennessee campaign. The Selma (Ala.) *Mississippi* says that two regiments of his army returned to Corinth with eighty-four men left out of thirteen hundred. A rebel naval force of twelve officers and one hundred men was lately captured by the Unionists at Smithfield, Isle of Wight county, Virginia. The Richmond *Examiner* announces that the negroes have caught quite a military fever in that city, and that they are already forming organizations of volunteers for service in the rebel armies.

The transports New York and Leary arrived at Annapolis, Md., yesterday from James river with over fifteen hundred national soldiers released from rebel captivity.

CONGRESS.

In the Senate yesterday the credentials of Joseph Segar, Senator elect from the loyal portion of the State of Virginia, in place of Mr. Bowden, deceased, were presented. Mr. Sumner moved to refer them to the Judiciary Committee, and, after a long discussion, the motion was agreed to. Mr. Sumner offered a joint resolution, which was adopted, declaring that the United States can never in any way recognize any part of the debt of the rebel States. The remainder of the session, up to eleven o'clock at night, was devoted to debate on political questions and the Naval Appropriation bill. The latter was finally passed, and the Senate adjourned.

In the House of Representatives the Committee on Elections reported in favor of admitting the representatives from Louisiana and Arkansas to seats, but no action was taken on the subject. The Senate Committee have decided in favor of admitting the Arkansas Senators, and will so report at an early day. Bills for the relief of Paymaster Brigham, of the army, and to extend the time for the completion of certain railroads in Michigan, were passed. In Committee of the Whole the consideration of the bill amendatory of the Internal Revenue act was resumed. Mr. Boutwell's amendment to levy a tax of one-half of one per cent on all sales of merchandise was debated, and adopted by a vote of fifty-eight to fifty-six.

The proposition to tax the issues of State banks so high as to force them out of circulation was rejected; but an amendment, that every national banking association and State bank or State banking association pay a tax of ten per cent on the amount of any State notes paid out by them after the first of January, 1865, was agreed to by a majority of two.

A new section, in effect taxing all speculative transactions in gold twenty per cent, was offered by Mr. Stevens, and adopted by a vote of fifty-one to forty-three. It is believed, however, that neither of the three last mentioned amendments will pass the House. Several other propositions were acted on, when the committee rose, the previous question was ordered on concurring in the various amendments, and the House adjourned.

THE LEGISLATURE.

In the State Senate yesterday the bill providing for a public park ground in New York was adopted. Bills to amend the charter of Brooklyn, for a public market in New York, and to amend the act providing for the widening of Fourth avenue, Brooklyn, were reported. Bills were introduced relative to the National Guard; for a railroad in Broadway; relating to deposits in savings banks; for a railroad in Christopher and other streets in this city; also the Harlem and Broadway Railroad, were introduced.

In the Assembly bills were introduced to incorporate the New York and Brooklyn Floating Petroleum Company; to improve Baltic street, Brooklyn; providing for two additional surgeons for the city of New York; for the regulation of the Fire Department of this city; also for the cleaning of the streets of New York and Brooklyn. Bills for the incorporation of various savings banks in this city and Brooklyn were reported; also a bill in relation to the Marine Corps of the City of New York. Bills to incorporate the Spuyten Duyvel and New York Railroad; for a railroad in Grand and other streets; for a railroad in Christopher and other streets, and for a railroad in South, West and other streets in New York; and making the office of Register of this city a salaried office were noted.

Both Houses of the Legislature have adjourned, according to resolution, until half-past seven o'clock on Thursday evening, the 23d inst.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS.

The Senatorial committee engaged in investigating our city affairs met at half past ten o'clock yesterday forenoon. Judge Edmonds and Mr. John McDonald, counsel for the Citizens' Association of the Eighteenth ward, appeared before the committee, and submitted a paper charging the Board of Supervisors with having favored the city in debt to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars without authority of law. Supervisor Tweed was present, and stated that he would be prepared to meet these charges on Monday, to which time the further consideration of this matter was adjourned. The committee will meet to-day to investigate the affairs of the Comptroller's office, and will hold daily sessions until their labors are concluded.

The Aldermanic Committee on Ordinances met yesterday to hear parties on the subject of storing petroleum in the city. A number of parties interested in the trade spoke against the passage of an ordinance to prevent the storage of petroleum, on the ground that it has become an article of such utility and commerce.

The trial of Bernard Fryer for the homicide of Harry Lazarus was brought to a close last night. The theory of the defense was that the prisoner was so grossly intoxicated as to be unable to conceive a premeditated design to commit murder, and that he was, therefore, entitled to a verdict of guilty of manslaughter in the first degree. The prisoner did not appear to be affected by the result.

The suit of the Count Joannes against Mr. Horace Greeley, for alleged libel in the *New York Tribune*, was concluded in the Court of Common Pleas, before Judge Daly, yesterday. Among the witnesses examined was Professor Francis Lieber, whose testimony related to the Count's right to his title of nobility. The jury, after deliberating about a quarter of an hour, rendered a verdict in favor of the defendant.

The Surrogate yesterday decided in favor of the claim of John Fryer for twenty-nine thousand dollars for services rendered to the late William S. Wetmore in the management of his estate. Mr. Wetmore, who was connected with George Peabody, of London, in business, leaves an estate of some three millions of dollars. For some years before his death Mr. Fryer managed all his affairs.

Colonel Baker returned from Washington yesterday, and immediately commenced operations again with the same vigor that characterized his proceedings on his first onslaught on the swindling bounty brokers and rascally bounty jumpers. Three or four brokers charged with defrauding recruits out of their bounty were summoned before the Colonel and in each case compelled to disgorge. Mr. L. E. Chittenden, late Register of the Treasury, was appointed judge advocate to try the bounty jumpers.

A respite has been granted in the case of the Lake Erie rebel pirate Captains Beall, and he will not be hanged on Governor's Island to-day, as was at first decided.

A man named John Meyer was yesterday committed for examination on the charge of being an extensive dealer in counterfeit notes on the government fifty cent notes. It is said that when arrested he had about him sixty of these bills and a counterfeit five dollar Treasury note.

Mary Ann Todd, keeper of an alleged respectable house in Greene street, died yesterday under circumstances which induced suspicion that she had been poisoned; but the facts of the case cannot be fully ascertained until a chemical analysis of the stomach shall have been made. Owing to remarks made by deceased just previous to her death, a man named Joseph Clapman was committed to await the result of the Coroner's investigation.

Four more of the cotton fleet have arrived in our harbor from Savannah. They will all discharge at the government grounds at Quarantine, where large sheds are being built to receive the cotton.

A fire broke out about twelve o'clock last night in the basement of No. 51 Liberty street, but was extinguished before any very great damage was done.

The body of a man, supposed from papers in his pockets to be that of George W. Weaver, of Pacific street

The Condition of the Metropolis—Some Reforms Suggested.

New York city is certainly destined to be the metropolis of the world, as it is now the metropolis of this country. Sooner or later, unless miraculous objections interpose, the State and the national Capitols will be removed to this metropolis. The Legislature has already appointed a committee to receive proposals from the various cities for the location of the capital of the State, and everybody admits that no other city can compete with New York, if our advantages be fairly presented and our authorities as liberal in their proposals as our citizens wish them to be. Yet, in spite of all this, there are at least two reforms which must be thoroughly and promptly made before this metropolis can do itself justice.

Our streets are in a terrible condition. One day we wade knee deep in mud, and the next day we are calling for canoes instead of cars, and reflecting upon the best means of transforming our omnibuses into gondolas. If a cold snap comes the thoroughfares are filled with hills and mountains of ice, over which vehicles tumble and toss at the small's pace, like the baggage wagons of Napoleon crossing the Alps. Not even the crosswalks are cleared of ice, and in sloppy weather we have to pay toll to ragged little boys and girls if we wish to cross the streets dryshod. These nuisances can be easily reformed. If private citizens can clean their sidewalks, certainly the Corporation can clear the crosswalks. As for the carriage ways, they ought to be cleaned in all weathers. There is no more sense in leaving the ice and snow for rains to wash away than there is in leaving the mud for the winds and sun to dry up. There is no want of money; but there is a great lack of executive ability. The citizens pay their high taxes, and would pay them willingly if they saw the city kept neat and clean. Other cities are so kept, without half of our natural facilities and at less than our annual expenditures. Why should New York be so far behind the age?

The second reform to which we direct attention is the sewerage. The sewers below ground, like the streets above ground, are in a horrible mess. They are not graded properly, or they are in some way obstructed, and the result is that they breed disease and render certain districts almost uninhabitable. The Herald office has long suffered from this sewerage nuisance, and we have spent much time and money in vain attempts to abate it. The evil is where we cannot get at it, and where the proper authorities ought to get at it and correct it. This offence is rank; it smells to heaven; and the offence of our dirty streets is equally within the cognizance of every citizen. It is a shame and a disgrace that these matters are not immediately reformed. We do not care at this time to attempt to fasten the responsibility upon any official or any department, nor do we believe in investigating committees as a remedy for the nuisances of which we complain. We simply state the broad, glaring, apparent facts that our streets are now very dirty, when they ought to be clean, and that our sewers now conduce to disease, when they ought to conduce to health. If these statements are not regarded, and these nuisances continue to disgrace the city, we shall see if anybody or some board cannot be held to account for such delinquencies. Like the farmer in the children's story, we first employ good words; then, if they fail, we try the virtue of sticks and stones.

OLD ABE ON THE FINE ARTS.—"WAITING FOR THE HOUR."—"Last summer," says that ancient radical abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, in his *Liberator* of the 17th inst., "after the public exhibition in this city (Boston) of Mr. W. T. Carlton's very meritorious painting, entitled 'Watch Meeting, December 31, 1862; or, Waiting for the Hour'—the hour of emancipation under the President's proclamation of January 1, 1863—it was thought eminently fitting that it should be purchased by subscription and presented to President Lincoln as a mark of personal respect and warm appreciation of his act, whereby more than three millions of fetters were broken, and a death-dealing blow was virtually given to the entire system of chattel slavery. The list of subscribers was headed by Governor Andrew, and composed of some of our most respected citizens—the sum raised amounting to five hundred dollars. The painting was duly forwarded to Washington," with an accompanying letter and this is the President's reply:—

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, Feb. 7, 1865.

MY DEAR MR. GARRISON—I have your kind letter of the 31st of January, and can only beg that you will pardon the seeming neglect occasioned by my constant engagements. When I received the spirited and admirable painting, 'Waiting for the Hour,' I directed my secretary not to acknowledge its arrival at once, preferring to make my personal acknowledgment of the thoughtful kindness of the donors, and waiting for some leisure hour. I have committed the discourtesy of not replying at all.

I hope you will believe that my thanks, though late, are most cordial, and I request that you will convey them to those associated with you in this flattering and generous gift.

Yours, very truly, your friend and servant, Wm. L. LINCOLN.

A handsome acknowledgment, and embodying a neat little joke withal. Old Abe was so well pleased with this picture of "Waiting for the Hour," that in "waiting for some leisure hour" to do justice to the subject, he came very near forgetting it entirely. He describes his present as "a spirited and admirable painting," which is, perhaps, all that the artist could desire; but, as a critic on the art, we are sorry that Old Abe did not enter into some specifications of the peculiar merits of the work—a few little masterly touches, for instance, like those in his famous letter to that veteran of the drama, Mr. Hackett, on the merits of Shakespeare.

"Waiting for the Hour," moreover, is a rich subject; one upon which the President might have extended his remarks profitably for the public benefit to half a column, in touching upon a few of his many anxious days and nights experienced in "waiting for the hour" of some great event or the news thereof. He might have said that a first rate picture of waiting for the hour, if rendered faithfully, would be one representing old Grandfather Welles fast asleep, or Jeff. Davis in Richmond sitting muffled up with his trunks around him, "waiting for the wagon." We are certainly disappointed that in this afore said letter Old Abe did not suggest that "waiting for the hour" of the emancipation proclamation was like waiting for "the Pope's bull against the comet."

"MONSIEUR TONSON COME AGAIN."—The rebel General Price, reported by the Richmond journals some time ago as dead and buried in Arkansas, is it now said, "still living," and has left Arkansas on a mission to Mexico for Kirby Smith. Some say it is a cotton mission, in which Price acts as the agent of Smith; others un-

The Rebel Finances—The Collapse of the Confederacy.

Already the simple want of money—the mere fact that there is no money in the country—has had a very great influence in breaking down the rebellion. The failure to pay the few soldiers that the confederacy had left after Sherman's successes in Alabama has done more to break up the Southern armies since then than we have done. It has doubtless caused a large share of those desertions that Lee now promises to forgive if the soldiers will only return to duty. He promises to forgive, but he does not even yet promise to pay. One of the rebel papers laments the want of patriotism which it sees in the fact that people in the confederacy never call the rebel money by any other name than "trash." Its worthlessness is recognized in more practical and worse ways than that, and is so positive that the people would apparently as lieve be without it as to have it. It is not recognized as money, and the disposition to take it has paralyzed all trade and industry in the South.

But bad as all that has been, the Southern leaders now propose to make it worse. They propose at once to throw aside all the flimsy pretext of a national credit represented by pieces of paper, and to declare a forced loan of everything in the Southern States. They indicate a disposition to give up their disguises, and to appear boldly in their real characters as the plunderers of a people by a gigantic application of the doctrine that property is robbery. They have no money, but they can make plenty. But suppose they make it? People to-day require two hundred dollars in paper for the specie value of one dollar; to-morrow they will require three hundred; the next day four, and so on. And now the leaders say this is a farce. What is the use of all this bother of buying paper, and printing, and all that? Let us come out openly, and take what we want at once, since we have the power. Such is their proposition, as put forth in the Richmond *Enquirer*, to seize all "cotton, tobacco, meat, forage and negroes"—to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. And not satisfied with that, they propose that then all the rebel bonds should "be taken likewise." There is infinitely little value in rebel bonds as they are, and these leaders propose to legislate even that little out of existence.

Aside from all military success or failure, this proposition is the collapse of the rebellion. It is an acknowledgment of the repudiation of the rebel cause by the Southern people; a declaration that those people have no faith in the cause and no hope from it, and will not support it nor give it the means of subsistence, except under the same compulsion that would induce them to give to the highwayman. It is a declaration of war made by the rebel leaders against the Southern people and their property, and a claim that governments are not made for the people, but the people for the government. The condition that it indicates assures us that the end of the struggle is near, and the effect it will have upon cultivation must prove the last ounce to the dreadfully overladen rebel cause.

GENERAL LEE'S APPEAL TO THE DESERTERS.—The rebel General Lee has issued an order to his army, calling back the stray sheep to the fold, and promising pardon to all deserters who return to their commands within sixty days. On three previous occasions Jeff. Davis issued a manifesto of a similar character, but apparently without any effect; for, so far from the stragglers availing themselves of the proffered clemency, Davis was compelled to admit, in one of his remarkable speeches in Georgia, that two-thirds of the rebel army were absent without leave—that is to say, deserters. No sooner does General Lee obtain supreme command than he insinuates the same fact. If that was true which Davis asserted then—and we cannot doubt its authority—it is far more so now, because we know that deserters are coming into our lines at all quarters in vast numbers. They are arriving at General Grant's lines by hundreds every day. Each steamer arriving from City Point brings numbers of them to Washington eager to take the oath of allegiance. In the Shenandoah valley they are flocking into Sheridan's lines; while in Georgia and the two Carolinas the spread of "loyalty" is immense; it has, in fact, become contagious since the transit of Sherman through those States.

General Lee evidently feels the effect of desertion most materially in his own thinned ranks. He does not appear to know how his own army stands; for he complains that "by men leaving their proper commands to join others in which they find service more agreeable," thus showing the utter demoralization which exists in his army. Perhaps it may be found that the more agreeable service is that of the United States. It is evident from this order of General Lee's, and the previous manifestoes of Jeff. Davis, that the rebel armies are melting away, and with them all the chances of the "confederacy." Even if the hopeless financial condition of the South, the absence of money, of war material, the effectual shutting out of blockade runners, with supplies from abroad which cannot be procured at home, do not speedily cause a collapse in Rebeldom, General Lee may soon find himself without an army to enter upon "the campaign about to open," of which he speaks in his late order.

Disfranchisement of Deserters.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17, 1865.

The Maine House of Representatives have passed a resolution providing for an amendment of the constitution of this State disfranchising deserters and absentees from military drafts.

The Case of the St. Albans Raiders.

MONTREAL, Feb. 16, 1865.

The counsel for the prosecution stated to-day that more witnesses were expected; but that he would not delay the case, as he considered that the crime of robbery was fully proved against Thurt and Francis, and quoted authorities to show that all the prisoners were equally guilty. He contended that the prosecution was entitled to a warrant for the extradition of the prisoners. He intended to await the argument of the defence on Monday, and it would be the privilege of the prosecutor for the Crown to reply to the defence.

The Council for the Defence.

The council for the defence decided that the prosecutor for the Crown had any right to sum up the case, as the real prosecutor was the United States.

The Judge considered that the Crown had the right to reply, and that whatever the counsel for the defence had to say, the Court would hear it.

The Cause was then adjourned until Monday.

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RICHMOND.

Exchange of Prisoners of War.

Mr. B. Cadwallader's Despatch. CRR FORT, Feb. 16, 1865.

Brigadier General Collis, for some time past president of the court martial convened at this place, has been appointed post commandant, but has not fairly entered on the discharge of his duties yet. No reason has transpired for the change, nor has his successor been named for president of the court that I am aware of.

PHOTODUPLICATIONS EXCHANGED.

The George Leary passed down the James river yesterday, loaded with exchanged Union soldiers bound for Annapolis. The New York will probably follow to-day. Lieutenant Colonel Mifflin will remain at Annapolis. Landing to bring up his office work and confer further with Mr. Gild concerning the details of the general exchange decided upon. The men received this time are in fair average health, and bear no marks of the rigorous and inhuman treatment such as characterized best loads of formerly released sufferers.

DEATH OF MAJOR RUGGLES, PAYMASTER FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, will mourn to learn that he died on February 9-11 inst. at Danville. His exchange was agreed upon and arranged for. Had he lived two weeks longer he would have been restored to home and freedom.

Mr. William H. Merriam's Despatch. HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA, ARMY OF THE JAMES, Feb. 16-17 A. M.

FEELING AND SENTIMENTS OF LEE'S ARMY.

For several days since the results of the late abortive peace negotiations have been known in Lee's army, and the effect upon the rebel soldiery ascertained, there have been an attentive listener at the office of Colonel Manning, Provost Marshal General of the Army of the James, to the views, wishes and opinions of the very large number of deserters coming daily within our lines, elicited and reduced to writing as they pass on down to Bermuda Hundred, and thence to their new homes in the North. The class of soldiers now deserting the rebel cause in scores every day is far better, physically and intellectually, than any I have ever before seen. They all tell the same dolorous story of discouragement and disgust at being compelled to look forward to another and utterly hopeless campaign, wherein their lives will be sacrificed without stint, there being not the slightest hope of achieving Southern independence or anything else save death. The assurance is given by Lee's officers that the rebel cause is lost, and that the confederacy will not fight any longer. One of these deserters said yesterday that he did not believe there were twelve bayonets in his regiment, all having been purposely thrown away in battle to avoid being taken captive.

THE DESERTION southwards and homewards of both officers and men is represented as truly alarming. In one instance recently the rebel officers lost or their Southern horses, seven of whom it was alleged by a rebel lieutenant, who deserted yesterday to our lines, would never return to duty. The much vaunted meetings of the regiment, whose proceedings are so ostentatiously paraded in the rebel newspapers, are in no respect truthful expressions of the feelings of the soldiery, if the statements of the constant influx of deserters are to be relied upon. For instance, in the Fifteenth Virginia command, numbering less than two hundred and fifty men, five men really voted resolutions looking to the cessation of the war. The rebel officers actually issued orders of the companies to pass war resolutions. These facts show for themselves the true state of feeling in the rebel ranks. The conclusion is irresistibly forced upon the mind that the rebel cause is close, and a few months more, at longest, will witness its termination forever.

THE OBSTRUCTIONS IN THE JAMES RIVER. It has been discovered that, previous to the late attempt of the rebel rams to come down the James, the obstructions had been removed from the river, and it would appear from that that a necessity exists for the more thorough picketing of the James river in that vicinity. Three night attacks have been made upon the rebel obstructions, and the pilot boat lost by them near the obstructions some time since.

THE REBEL RAN TROUPE. This monstrous rebel craft suffered most severely in the recent attempted descent of the James—next to the Drewry, which was totally blown up. The Virginia was injured so severely by one of our monitors, that she was plied smashing in one of her batteries. Commodore Mitchell is in command of the rebel fleet. It is thought he will soon be succeeded by Sumner. The rebel cause is close, and a few months more, at longest, will witness its termination forever.

EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS. Lieutenant Colonel Mifflin, United States agent for the exchange of prisoners, of the Department of Virginia, at Richmond, has been ordered to leave for the Department of the Potomac.

Surgeon George Suckley has been announced as Medical Director of the Department of Virginia, at Richmond.

Surgeon George Suckley, relieved by orders from the War Department.

The Press Despatch.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17, 1865.

Information from the Army of the Potomac states that the despatch of the 10th inst., announcing the execution of James L. Hicks, was a mistake, as his sentence was suspended by the President until further orders.

All is quiet in the Army of the Potomac.

Occasional artillery duels, however, take place between the batteries near the Appomattox.

Deserters from the rebel army have been quite numerous for some time past, not less than twenty-five coming within our lines on Wednesday morning. They present their usual dirty, ragged and hungry appearance. Their first question almost always is, "Where can we get rations?"

A severe storm commenced on Tuesday night, which threatened to continue some time.

Generals Humphreys and Wilcox have left on short leaves of absence to come home.

ITALIAN OPERA.—The Academy was filled last night with an audience as large in numbers and as fashionable in appearance as we have seen there this season. The attraction was the first production in some years of *Ernani*. The opera was admirably performed, and was received with very marked evidence of approbation.

Zucchi, who was most cordially received after her recent indisposition, sang and acted the rôle of Elvira with that fidelity and dramatic force which render her interpretations of such parts delightful. The Ernani of Maccheroni, received a very cordial reception, and the last time—produced on this occasion, we believe, by special request. On Tuesday *Ernani* was announced. Verdi's grand opera of *La Forza del Destino* was to be given on an early night next week; but as the recent indisposition of Madame Zucchi, and the frequent occupation of the Academy for balls of late have somewhat retarded the rehearsal, it is an unquestionable manner, it is probable that Friday will be the earliest time at which we may expect it. As the *matinee* to-day Lucia di Lammermoor, the indisposition of Miss Kellogg preventing her from appearing in *La Diana*, she is announced.

WINTER GARDEN.—A HANLEY MATINEE.—To-day there will be a *matinee* performance of Hamlet at this theatre, given principally for the accommodation of suburban residents who cannot attend the play at night. The performance will be the same in all respects as the regular evening performance, including the whole strength of the admirable cast. There will be, also, no doubt, the same brilliant assemblage of city ladies that has made the opera *matinee* so pleasant a feature in metropolitan life. The doors will open at one P. M. and the performance will begin at half past one. As it is impossible that any man could play a part like Hamlet twice in the same day, there will, of course, be no performance at night.

THOMAS THOMAS' SYMPHONIC SOIREE.—The third symphonic soiree of Theodore Thomas takes place this evening at Irving Hall. The announcement, we presume, is sufficient to secure a large audience, the excellence of these entertainments being already fully known and appreciated. Miss Adelaide Phillips and Mr. S. B. Mills are the soloists. The selections are from the best works of eminent German composers, including Beethoven, Gluck, Spohr and Raff. The house will undoubtedly, as heretofore, be crowded this evening.